



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER



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Native Women's Association of Canada
L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada





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Message from the CEO

The federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments, and Canadians, must implement 231 steps to end the genocide against Indigenous women and girls. Those 231 Calls for Justice—outlined in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls—are legal imperatives. “These Calls for Justice represent important ways to end the genocide and to transform systemic and societal values that have worked to maintain colonial violence,” reads the report.

One of the pathways to ending the genocide is to end the economic marginalization of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people. In this issue of Shining the Spotlight, we offer stories detailing the progress that the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) is making in this area.

We bring you a success story, written by a graduate of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program. In

her own words, Luanne Kuzma traces her journey to achieve her dream to open an online clothing store and how she found a new dream in the process. If it weren’t for the program, Luanne says she felt supported and that NWAC, ISET and her supervisor helped her achieve her goals.

Our National Apprenticeships Program (NAP) is another avenue open to Indigenous WG2STGD+ people who are interested in entering the construction and manufacturing trades. This story carries testimonials from Raven and Kaylyn, whose lives have been positively impacted by the program. They use the words life-changing, growth, supportive, and inspiring when they talk about their own apprenticeship journey. And Poppy, a women business owner in a male-dominated trade, gives her insights into the value of NAP from an employer perspective.

We also have an update on three other programs designed to promote economic empowerment: the Community Workforce Development Program, the Women’s Entrepreneur Accelerator program, and #BeTheDrum.





Message from the CEO (CONT.)

The first two are very new, and we are excited to see these effect transformative change. As for #BeTheDrum, to date, over 330 Indigenous women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs have signed on to be mentored, network, and enroll in business, management, and entrepreneurial workshops.

Indigenous WG2STGD+ people have a right to security, which the National Inquiry's final report defines as security in social and economic terms. Ending their economic marginalization is a key stepping stone to ending the genocide—and a pivotal focus for NWAC. It's why we place much importance on such grassroots programs, and why we are advocating at both the national and international levels. You'll read about this work in our MMIWG2S+ story, which highlights the cross-Canada and global outreach activities I am undertaking to promote and advocate for Indigenous-led approaches to helping the grassroots people I represent achieve economic gains, so they and their families may feel secure.

In this same story, you will see that I have embarked on what I call mission tours to countries within the Central American Integration System. I am sharing our successes and developing business partnerships—with the aim to

support the social, economic, cultural, and political growth and well-being of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people.

Health and wellness is another touchpoint area highlighted in the National Inquiry's final report. And so we bring you our progress on our oral health project—after all, there is a direct connection between the health of our mouths and our overall health. A large part of health and wellness is tied up in the homes we live in. Crowded spaces, houses in disrepair, poor drinking water, unsanitary conditions all have a bearing on our health. In this issue, we give you an update on a sustainable, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing model, which is very exciting. The environment shares equal attention, for obvious reasons; we want to ensure that we are heard on important environmental policy issues, which impact Indigenous Peoples. We bring you an update on our work in this area, including reducing the risk of disasters, the Water Carriers project, and protecting fish and fish habitats.

This issue of *Shining the Spotlight* highlights the breadth and depth of the advocacy work we are doing to empower and amplify the voice of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people across this country.



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Three Programs that Empower Indigenous WG2STGD+ People

The Community Workforce Development Program

Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the Community Workforce Development Program is a one-year project, ending in March 2024. Its mission is to empower Indigenous WG2STGD+ individuals living in communities with populations of less than 10,000.

The program consists of two vital components. First, the skills training, which can be conducted either online or in-person. Second, work placements within local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with wage subsidies provided to individuals who have

completed their training. The aim is to encourage local employers to hire the individual once the subsidized work placement ends.

The training sessions encompass a wide range of skills, including digital literacy, job-specific proficiencies, and hands-on trade-like abilities such as barista or culinary training. By offering a diverse range of training opportunities, we aim to equip participants with the tools needed to thrive in the workforce.

The Economic Development team is implementing the project in collaboration with NWAC's provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs). The PTMAs are identifying the communities that would be targeted, as well as local labour market needs. This involves engaging with SMEs to determine available job opportunities and skills gaps.





Three Programs that Empower Indigenous WG2STGD+ People (CONT.)

This partnership with ESDC enables us to contribute to the development of a National Workforce Strategy. The strategic framework will outline key priorities, policies, and initiatives that shape an approach to workforce development and employment for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people. As part of our commitment, we are conducting extensive background research and engaging in roundtable discussions with various stakeholders. Our aim is to foster a more inclusive and resilient workforce, addressing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities and contributing to overall economic resilience.

We are eager to see this transformative project unfold, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

#BeTheDrum

#BeTheDrum is an entrepreneurial outreach and navigation program developed by NWAC. It is designed to build the skills of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people entering the spheres of business, management, and entrepreneurship. #BeTheDrum has been a very successful program and has been in operation for over three years. Since then, we have attracted over 330 Indigenous women and gender-diverse entrepreneur members.

#BeTheDrum works to engage and prepare existing and budding Indigenous entrepreneurs for continued success. Those who join our program will be greeted by a team of dedicated entrepreneur navigators and mentors, with access to relevant workshops, networking events, peer-to-peer groups, and our live social media Q&A sessions.

The impact of such support will increase the likelihood of business survival past the start-up phase, into successful enterprise, and finally leading to higher presence in the economic landscape of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

This summer, #BeTheDrum has covered a vast array of business-related topics for workshops. These include:

- accounting
- business success
- marketing for makers
- preparing for tax season





Three Programs that Empower Indigenous WG2STGD+ People (CONT.)

We hosted presentations from a number of groups, including:

- Business Development Canada and its services to Indigenous entrepreneurs
- Indigenous financial institutes in collaboration with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
- doing business with government in collaboration with Public Services and Procurement Canada

We also held bi-weekly networking circles.

This year, we are hosting over 47 workshops and networking circles, with at least one event occurring each week.

Indigenous Women's Entrepreneur Accelerator

The WES Accelerator is a new program to NWAC. Through the Accelerator program, we have held five workshops since the April on the following topics:

- art of entrepreneurship
- creativity in digital spaces
- artistry and digital illustration
- making it in the beading industry

We also continue to provide mentorship and navigational support to member entrepreneurs.



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An ISET Success Story: Luanne Kuzma

I had applied for funding through the Rupertsland Institute, and unfortunately, had missed the deadline for funding approval. The Northern Regional Manager made me aware of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program through NWAC. I had previously obtained my Business Administration Certificate and wanted to continue my education and obtain my Business Management Diploma with the goal of opening my own ladies' clothing store.

As an adult learner, I need to continue working during my studies to provide financially for my family and take care of our various financial obligations. Obtaining a student loan did not make sense financially, as I did not want to add to those financial obligations. Without finding a way to obtain funding to continue my education and pursue my career goals, I knew I would not go back to school.

I applied for the Business Management Diploma program through Portage College, which allowed me to take my courses online and around my work schedule. The ISET program paid for my school fees as well as the cost of books; it was such a relief to be able to focus on my education and not have the added stress of the extra financial responsibilities of school. During my studies I began work as a ladies' retail manager, and made a career change to a post-secondary advisor with the Rupertsland Institute while opening my online clothing store.

When I started my diploma program, I was a full-time student with five courses each semester and working full-time as a retail manager. With such a large course load and work schedule, the first year was challenging. My ISET advisor was extremely supportive and understanding, and when I made the extremely difficult decision to withdraw from two courses in each semester, I was met with nothing but support. I was able to obtain funding through the ISET program to continue my Business Management Diploma program into a new school year and complete the





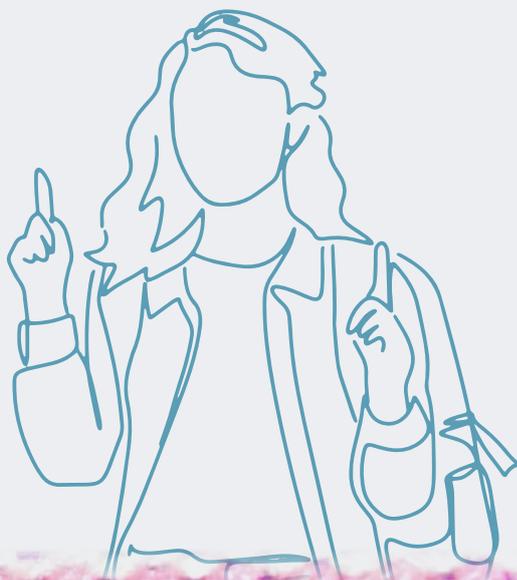
An ISET Success Story: Luanne Kuzma (CONT.)

additional four courses I needed to obtain my diploma. I was able to obtain funding for all of my school fees and cost of books in my second year of the program.

I have learned that it is not a failure to realize that sometimes you cannot do everything all at once, and it is extremely important to reach out for help when you are feeling overwhelmed. There are other programs that offer funding that would not have funded my second year after withdrawing from classes during the first program year. I feel extremely grateful that NWAC, the ISET program, and my advisor believed in me and continued to support me and help me achieve my goals.

By taking a step back and reducing my course load in each semester, I was able to focus better on the other courses. Although it took a year longer than expected, I am very proud to say that I am graduating and receiving my Business Management Diploma with Honours and a 3.5 GPA.

I have realized my dream and have opened my online clothing store, but I believe I have also found a new one. I have decided to continue with my education and obtain my Business Management degree with the goal of progressing within the Ruperstland Institute. I have received so much support from my advisor and the ISET program that working as a post-secondary advisor has become so rewarding, knowing that I am also helping others achieve their goals and dreams.



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Forging a Shared Base of Knowledge and Understanding for Informed Actions

Throughout June and July, the Communications team carried out complex projects touching on the knowledge, experiences, and history of women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people (WG2STGD+), making them accessible and understandable, but above all creating dialogue in the digital sphere and beyond. We ran communications campaigns aimed at strengthening Indigenous identity and paving the way for better integration of diversity and cultural richness of Indigenous Peoples. Our efforts over the past two months have paved the way for even more enlightened actions in favour of inclusion and representation.

The launch of **Genocide in Canada: A Legal Explanation**, a graphic booklet explaining how the national inquiry came to the inescapable conclusion of genocide, was highly promoted on all platforms, resulting in several appearances in the national media (Yahoo News, Windspeaker). Our audiences' engagements reached a total of 130,099 likes, shares, and comments across all platforms and on the website. NWAC asked the Ministers of Education in each province and territory to incorporate the material into the high school curricula of their jurisdictions.

During National Indigenous Month, CEO Lynne Groulx **celebrated the successes made so far**, citing the National Inquiry that resulted in the Calls to Justice, the decline in unemployment rates, and the momentum created in non-Indigenous people's audiences about the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls genocide. In June, President Carol McBride **urged the public to learn more about Indigenous unique traditions,**





experiences, and culture, to build a foundation of shared knowledge and understanding as the country tackles the ongoing work of reconciliation.

Both statements were supported by NWAC's "Our History, Our Voice, Our Future" campaign, calling First Nations, Inuit, Métis women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people to tell the world what Indigenous history meant to them and how it has made them strong and resilient in their daily lives. In June, NWAC engaged with its social media audience through a series of quizzes that tested the rich and diverse histories, cultures, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples to deepen public understanding of Indigenous history.

During the same month, we enabled our supporters to double their impact by donating to NWAC through our fundraising campaign, with every dollar donated matched up to \$10,000 by Citron Hygiene, our campaign's business partner. Promoted by both NWAC and Citron Hygiene, the campaign generated a total of 12,585 impressions, comments, likes, shares, and clicks.

To commemorate Pride Month, the Communications team developed captivating and compelling content to highlight the importance of identity and culture, as well as the existence and knowledge of Indigenous terminology related to gender diversity and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The promotion

of "Intersections: The Pride Month" campaign generated a total of 86,684 impressions with 6,292 engagements on all posts.

On June 8, we promoted the launch of **NWAC's first culinary and intercultural indigenous experience**, the "Ancestral Mexican Culinary Classes," which kicked off a series of four culinary experiences featuring chefs Antonia Reyes and Modesta Ramírez Orozcoand. The event showcased the ancestral customs, ancient culture, and historical traditions of Mexico. Our live broadcast of all classes on June 15–16, on Facebook, generated a total of 28,389 impressions, engagements, and post clicks on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Press releases

NWAC Issues Federal Government a Failing Grade for Continued Inaction on its MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan as a conclusion of a detailed analysis of the progress made by the federal government on the implementation of its national action plan. The analysis also assessed action taken by NWAC on our own action plan, Our Calls, Our Actions, which received a much higher score.

NWAC points out a failing Canada's UNDRIP Action Plan: Canada's plan for implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) fails to affirm the role of Indigenous women as reconciliation leaders. NWAC said it failed short





Forging a Shared Base of Knowledge and Understanding for Informed Actions (CONT.)

for gendered groups. The UNDRIP Action Plan promises a path toward reconciliation that would undo centuries of colonial harm but ignores the vital role of Indigenous Peoples in regaining their own power and place.

NWAC, OAS, and the Trust for the Americas launched a new program to help train hundreds of Indigenous People for high-tech jobs. The program will provide hundreds of Indigenous People with the digital skills required for high-demand jobs in the tech industry. The Empowering Indigenous Peoples through Digital Skills Project, which was unveiled during the week of the OAS General Assembly in Washington, D.C., aims to enhance the livelihoods and opportunities of Indigenous People in communities across Québec, British Columbia, and Alberta.

At the annual meeting of premiers, the Premiers Table listened intently as NWAC offered a unique perspective on issues facing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. We also outlined the actions we are taking to improve Indigenous lives.

NWAC demands immediate resumption of the search for women's remains and that the federal, provincial, and municipal governments take steps to begin an immediate search of landfills near Winnipeg for the remains of Indigenous women victims of a serial killer. We demanded that searches commence immediately in both the Prairie Green and Brady Road landfills for the remains of Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, and an unidentified woman who has been named Mashkode Bizhiki'ikwe (Buffalo Woman). We also called on governments to stop shirking their responsibility and to get the job done.



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A Recap of Environmental Projects

Engaging in Conservation

As part of the Supporting Capacity of National Indigenous Representatives to Engage in Conservation project, NWAC participates, develops, and implements policies and programs related to conservation, wildlife, and biodiversity—and to help Indigenous people engage in conservation.

NWAC has received an extension of funding for this project until 2026. This year, the Environment Unit will engage Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people in a technical roundtable on the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**. The roundtable took place on June 29, 2023. NWAC also plans to host a side event at COP 16 in Türkiye (formally Turkey).

Inclusive Resilience: Reducing Disaster Risks

This Red Cross project is in its final year. We will be holding a virtual Elder and Knowledge Holder-led engagement session involving three communities to identify barriers to information access regarding disasters and disaster preparedness and to make recommendations to address these barriers. The engagement session, which is planned for August 11, 2023, will draw on interviews and a survey





A Recap of Environmental Projects (CONT.)

that was conducted in three indigenous communities:

- Moose Cree First Nation (Ontario)
- Lake Babine First Nation (British Columbia)
- Bay St. George area (Newfoundland and Labrador)

Indigenous communities and WG2STGD+ people

- investigated the framework to an Indigenous-led water governance strategy

The team is working on a final report and developing its portal. The knowledge collected will be shared in March 2024.

Water Carriers

The **Water Carriers project** is intended to empower the voices of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people in discourses around water governance, especially in their role as the rightful protectors of Indigenous rights to potable and navigable waters. As part of phase 2 of the Water Carriers project, NWAC has brought together Indigenous WG2STGD+ individuals and youth to discuss their role as water carriers, the challenges related to water insecurity, and the impacts of climate change on the waters in their communities.

The Environment team recently completed a survey, which attracted over 196 respondents. The survey:

- gathered information from and the experiences of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people on perceived risks regarding water in their communities
- identified the importance of a value-based approach to Indigenous water-policy making
- evaluated current policies and strategies employed to engage



Protecting Fish and Fish Habitats

The Fish and Fish Habitat Protection (FFHP) program received extended funding from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). This summer, NWAC will begin implementing the new phase of the FFHP program in line with areas identified by DFO under the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the Fisheries Act of Canada and Species at Risk Act.





A Recap of Environmental Projects (CONT.)

This phase will focus on three areas:

- offsetting and habitat banking policy
- interim and new codes of practice
- framework for conserving aquatic species at risk

Three roundtable sessions are planned for August and September 2023. We will also be holding 10 semi-structured interviews and one online survey.

Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Change Policy

The project focuses on adaptation, mitigation biodiversity conservation within the context of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, particularly measures to reduce emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change, and build resilience.

National Survey: This year, we will be conducting a national survey on climate change impacts, adaptations, and mitigations on Indigenous WG2STGD+ people. The survey will focus largely on the Indigenous Climate Leadership

Initiative, geared towards examining how the federal government can work with Indigenous communities better.

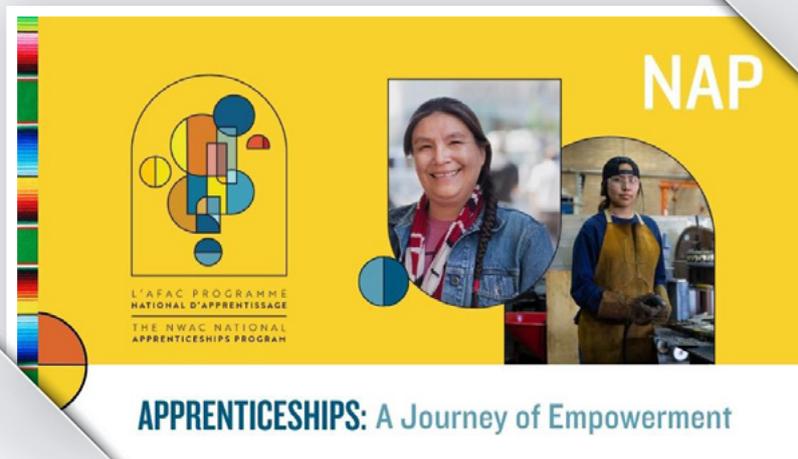
Newsletters: We have produced the first of 6 newsletters, with the first focusing on the impacts of wildfires on Indigenous WG2STGD+ people. Future issues will highlight key government decisions concerning the environment and best practices in communities.

Toolkits: Toolkits are being developed on climate change impacts, adaptations, mitigations, conservation efforts and best practices that Indigenous WG2STGD+ people can use.

From this engagement session, NWAC and Environment and Climate Change Canada will collect information to supplement that provided by our provincial and territorial member associations and through regional grassroots reports. This information will supplement existing gaps and provide input into federal and international climate change policy processes, to be consolidated by NWAC.



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Apprenticeships: A Journey of Empowerment

NWAC's National Apprenticeships Program (NAP) advocates for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse+ (WG2STGD+) people to be included in the construction and manufacturing trades. With funding from the Government of Canada, the program is an important step forward in representing Indigenous WG2STGD+ people in typically male-dominated trades and in fostering a brighter and more inclusive workforce.

Once again, NWAC is breaking down barriers and opening doors for aspiring apprentices. We are proud to be promoting diversity and inclusivity among small and medium-sized enterprises. It is a privilege to advocate for these businesses, on behalf of our applicants, some with very little or no

experience in the skilled trades, but are driven and excited about starting a new opportunity, regardless of their skillsets. Despite not having a robust resumé, a significant number of apprentices are in the program to pursue their passions and gain valuable skills. This alone demonstrates commitment and a willingness to learn, which any business would be lucky to count on.

One year ago, when NAP was launched, we started to hear from Indigenous journeywomen and gender-diverse workers around the country who were willing to share their experience with us. Their lives had been positively impacted by joining the skilled trades and they had achieved their career goals.

We heard the stories of single mothers around the land who started an apprenticeship, got their certificates, and joined a union. Some of them joined the trades through different programs over the years and worked hard to shape their own future. That is the case of Raven, a member of Gitxaala Nation,





Apprenticeships: A Journey of Empowerment (CONT.)

Git lax mo'on (People of the Saltwater), just off the coast of Prince Rupert, who moved to Vancouver in 2006 to build a career as a plumber:

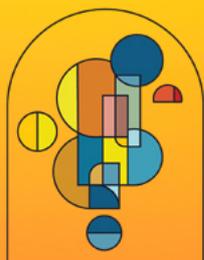
"I wasn't sure what I was going to become, but I knew I was working towards something. My father always told me that it would be wise to get a trade under my belt, so I went for my plumbing, Gas B fitter, and steamfitter tickets. I am a triple ticketed as a Red Seal Plumber, steamfitter, and certified Gas B fitter. Being a member of UA has benefited my family a lot, such as health care benefits, job security, great wages, and growth as an individual. Growth through education is vital. It is important that we have skilled workers to bring quality to our industry. The more we work together and learn and educate ourselves, the more we can invest in our future."

When we embark on a new path, we encounter obstacles, but knowing we are not alone, that we can count on NWAC's advocacy, helps us hope for a better future. There are great challenges and unique barriers ahead for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people when entering a male-dominated industry. That is a truth worth telling, and by acknowledging the challenges ahead, we can move

forward with the support of the National Apprenticeships Program.

These are the words of Kaylyn, an electrical apprentice in northeast Alberta, who has recently found her career path through NAP:

"The assistance you provided in finding a sponsor for my electrician apprenticeship was truly life-changing. Your dedication to connecting aspiring Indigenous women with opportunities in trades is commendable. The mentorship, guidance, and resources you offered me were instrumental in shaping my career trajectory and enabling me to pursue my passion for the electrical trade. Moreover, your program fostered a supportive and inclusive community of like-minded individuals. The encouragement and camaraderie I experienced among fellow Indigenous women in the program were incredibly uplifting. Through networking events, mentorship programs, and workshops, I had the privilege of connecting with inspiring women who shared similar aspirations. The bonds I formed and the knowledge I gained from these interactions have been invaluable and will continue to guide me throughout my career."



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THE NWAC NATIONAL
APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAM





Apprenticeships: A Journey of Empowerment (CONT.)

NAP has successfully endorsed apprenticeships for the following trades: construction and industrial electrician, welding, glazier, painter, sprinkler fitter, and heavy equipment operator. Apprentices who successfully complete these programs can look forward to future autonomy and financial security.

But another important impact is that SMEs that join our program believe NAP is a step toward reconciliation. NWAC is helping to expand their understanding of Indigenous culture and diversity and inclusion policies through NAP. That is the case for Poppy:

“As a woman business owner in a trade that is dominated by men, I am thrilled to be participating in this program that is getting women into the trades. I particularly love that it is giving Native women the opportunity to learn a trade that will benefit them for life. The program

was easy to get signed up for and to get access to the grant funding. This incentive has allowed me to invest in training and mentorship programs, ensuring that our new apprentice receives the necessary guidance to succeed. I am proud to support our new apprentice, not just in her career development, but also in addressing other life challenges she faces as a Native woman. It is a privilege to be part of her journey and to have a positive impact on her life.”

The National Apprenticeships Program will continue advocating for greater inclusion in the construction and manufacturing skilled trades. The program has helped to create lasting connections and successful partnerships.



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Making Mouths Matter

The Health Team continues to work on unique and important projects to further healthcare access, equity, and advocacy for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat. We recently published *Making Mouths Matter: An Investigation into Anti-Indigenous Racism (AIR) and its Impacts on the Oral Healthcare of Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender Diverse People in Canada*. The report seeks to understand how AIR impacts these populations, but also what can be done within the system to prevent it.

We developed two surveys, one for oral healthcare practitioners and one for Sharing Circle participants. The goal of the first survey was to see if Indigenous methods, history, and employees were part of the oral healthcare offered by oral healthcare practitioners. The goal of the second survey was to encourage

participants to share their knowledge, needs, and experiences. Virtual and in-person sharing circles were conducted to clarify further and share history and information.

These valuable activities emphasized the direct connection between oral health and the overall health of Indigenous People. After completing the surveys, the participants of the eight Sharing Circles (four virtual, four in-person) sat with us to speak about their experiences firsthand. From this, we used thematic analysis, as well as community-based participatory action research approaches to find the elements of oral healthcare that were most affected by racism. We also developed recommendations for ending racism at a systemic level.

Addressing oral healthcare is essential to ensuring the overall healthcare of Indigenous Peoples and strengthening trust and respect between Indigenous communities and current and future oral healthcare providers. Through this project, we hope to highlight how





distinctions-based approaches can be incorporated into practice to:

- address the oral healthcare needs of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people
- explore how Traditional Knowledge and Teachings can be a part of community-based oral healthcare programs
- understand better the needs of on-and off-reserve, urban, rural, and remote Indigenous WG2STGD+ people, and what oral healthcare services are desired
- determine how oral healthcare providers can engage in better practices and access the training and resources needed to provide culturally relevant oral healthcare to Indigenous WG2STGD+ people

An interesting aspect of this project was the ability to conduct in-person Sharing Circles in Vancouver (on x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations territory), Winnipeg (on Treaty No. 1 Territory), Happy Valley Goose Bay (on Nitassinan (Innu) Territory) and Rankin Inlet (on Inuit Nunangat).

The Health Team is grateful for time and knowledge that participants gave towards this project. We look forward to helping to improve oral healthcare and the overall healthcare of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat.



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Indigenous Child and Family Services: A Milestone Project by NWAC

The Legal Unit at the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is proud to announce the completion of a landmark initiative, the **Government Engagement Mechanisms on An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families Final Report**. Funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), this project aimed to restore jurisdiction over child and family services (CFS) to Indigenous communities, marking a significant step forward in our ongoing mission.

This project was carried out through a series of government engagement mechanisms, which involved six expert round tables and numerous one-on-one interviews. These sessions brought

together a diverse range of voices from Indigenous populations across Canada, including legal experts, social workers, academics, community leaders, Elders, youth, gender-diverse people, and individuals with lived experience in care. The richness of these discussions underscored the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach to policy-making.

The discussions were comprehensive, covering 17 topics identified by ISC, along with several other emergent topics. The insights and perspectives shared during these sessions were invaluable, leading to the formulation of nine key recommendations. These recommendations are not just a list of suggestions; they represent a collective vision for a future where Indigenous communities have full control over their child and family services.

We believe these recommendations have the potential to bring about transformative change for Indigenous





communities. They include commitments to need-based funding, mandatory professional training on the Act for lawyers, judges, and CFS providers, and the creation of a national Indigenous CFS oversight body. Each recommendation is a step towards a more equitable and just system that respects and upholds the rights of Indigenous communities.

One of the recommendations that resonated deeply with many participants was the need to ensure that Indigenous WG2STGD+ people are included in consultations about the Act and in its review process. This inclusion is vital to ensure that the voices of all members of our communities are heard and considered. It is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and respect for all identities and experiences.

The conclusion of this project is a significant milestone in the journey towards restoring jurisdiction over child and family services to Indigenous communities. However, it is not the end of our work. These recommendations provide a roadmap for future action, and we are committed to continuing our advocacy efforts to ensure their implementation.

We are excited about the potential impact of these recommendations and look forward to seeing the positive changes they will bring to Indigenous children, youth, and families across Canada. We envision a future where Indigenous communities have the resources, support, and autonomy they need to thrive.

We thank everyone who participated in this project for their contributions and dedication to this important cause. Your voices have shaped this project and will continue to guide our work in the future.



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT



Tools for Advocacy: The Warrior's Briefcase and Equity Compass

The Executive Policy Team at NWAC has published its long-awaited grassroots toolkit, which was developed to empower Indigenous WG2STGD+ activists and advocates in navigating federal level advocacy. *A Warrior's Briefcase: Tools for Engaging in Federal Level Advocacy* was created with support from Crown-Indigenous and Northern Relations Canada and as a result of the generous feedback provided by Indigenous community members. Grassroots Indigenous WG2STGD+ people across the four directions shared their ideas and feedback in sharing circles conducted by NWAC in 2022. During these sessions, they stressed the need for guidance on how to effectively engage with the federal government as advocates while prioritizing self-care. *The Warrior's Briefcase* was developed in response to those needs.

Informed by the determination, strength, and resilience of those who lent their voices to this project, this toolkit offers Indigenous WG2STGD+ activists and advocates practical guidance on navigating federal systems, with wellness and safety at top of mind. It includes tailored considerations about legislative processes, accessing federal-level funding, and guidance on community organizing, campaigning, and demonstrating. NWAC is thrilled to add this toolkit to its collection of accessible resources that ensure the rights of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse+ (WG2STGD+) people.

Since 2007, culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) has undergone significant changes following feedback from Indigenous activists, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and community members. During a series of virtual sharing circles held in 2022, considerable feedback was given by community members regarding the CRGBA framework. Although CRGBA





Tools for Advocacy: The Warrior's Briefcase and Equity Compass (CONT.)



continues to be a useful tool for policy analysis, research, and advocacy, community members emphasized the opportunity to reframe CRGBA to make it more accessible to the community for which it was designed. For example, the language of “analysis” imposes a colonial lens on the perspectives of Indigenous lived experiences and Ways of Knowing.

With these considerations, NWAC revised the CRGBA framework to ensure it continues to evolve and reflect wise practices and the perspectives of community members. In previous publications, CRGBA has been described not only as a tool for policymakers, but as a framework that should guide our ways of thinking, being, and doing.

The Equity Compass is a renewed conceptualization of the CRGBA framework, designed to provide guidance in navigating policy, research, and advocacy. It is a visual representation of how each concept—or direction—informs the other. “Equity” refers to both the means and the outcome of the journey, and like one’s journey in advocacy, the Equity Compass continues to evolve in line with the needs and perspectives of the Indigenous communities we are responsible to.

Equipped with *the Warrior’s Briefcase* and the Equity Compass, we will continue to develop tools that foster agency and empowerment for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people and their communities.



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT



Our MMIWG2S+ Advocacy Work

International Advocacy

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has called on the federal government to implement an action plan to address the calls for justice and help make every part of this land safe for all. However, our stories of lost loved ones have rarely been heard outside our borders. Now NWAC is going global and taking our message of advocacy for all Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people (WG2STGD) to the international level.

This year, our CEO, Lynne Groulx attended the 53rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC. She also began

a series of missions across the Americas beginning with visits to El Salvador and Costa Rica, highlighting our cause and elevating our voices to a global audience of decision-makers and government officials.

These visits are part of a crucial relationship-building process between NWAC and the eight nations that make up the Central American Integration System (Spanish: Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, or SICA); Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. International missions are planned to the rest of the remaining SICA countries, where more than 60 different Indigenous groups represent approximately 20 percent of the total Central American population.





Our MMIWG2S+ Advocacy Work (CONT.)

On these trips, CEO Lynne Groulx has been able to share knowledge and experiences with Indigenous groups and develop business partnerships to support and enfranchise the social, economic, cultural, and political growth and well-being of Indigenous WG2STGD people. Standing in solidarity, Indigenous people across different countries are supporting and guiding one another.

“We haven’t been talking enough as Indigenous Peoples across the national boundaries established through colonization. It is extremely powerful when Indigenous Peoples unite.” Lynne Groulx, CEO

We are also able to raise the profile of our campaigns and bring international awareness to the MMIWG2S+ genocide. We are working hard to amplify our advocacy for Indigenous WG2STGD people to a global audience. These missions boost our international reputation and help initiate important conversations about the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples to the attention of decision- and policy-makers across the world.

In other news, NWAC’s MMIWG2S+ team recommended in June that the Government of Canada accede to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (known as the Convention of Belém do Pará). As the first legally binding international treaty that criminalizes all forms of violence against women and obliges States Parties to take appropriate measures to prevent, punish, and eradicate such violence, the Convention will have a significant impact

on ensuring the safety of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people in Canada.

NWAC believes that Canada must join the Convention, which has been ratified by 32 of the 35 member states of the Organization of American States (OAS). Canada should also fully implement its provisions as a means to advance and secure both gender-based human rights in particular and Indigenous rights in general, here in Canada and around the world.

The Convention will also provide an additional framework for the international community to investigate and assess the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG2S+) genocide in Canada.

The MMIWG2S+ team also took part in the North American Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls (Trilateral Working Group). We collaborated with other Indigenous women leaders from Mexico, Canada, and the United States to share knowledge and best practices as a commitment to coordinated action to address the disproportionate levels of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls across the continent.

Finally, we met with the Data + Feminism Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to discuss the email alert tool it has developed. The tool will be helpful for collecting MMIWG2S+ case data from media sources, to add to the Safe Passage map.





Our MMIWG2S+ Advocacy Work (CONT.)

National Advocacy

The meeting between the Indigenous Women’s Circle (IWC) for Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) and Minister Marci Ien took place on June 14, 2023. Topics for discussion were economic prosperity, gender-based violence, the 2SLGBTQIA+ Action plan, and transformational change.

Economic prosperity gives individuals more agency and independence, including the ability to leave unsafe situations. Statistics Canada data show an increase in Indigenous peoples’ educational achievements as well as gains in employment and business creation. The Government of Canada has made investments to address the barriers to entrepreneurship for Indigenous women, but more work needs to be done.

Pillar 4 of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence involves “implementing Indigenous-led approaches.” There is inequity between the rates of gender-based violence (GBV) among Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. This inequity stems from unequal structures and different histories.

In August 2022, the Government of Canada launched the first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan to advance the rights and equality of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and additional sexually and gender-diverse people. The plan focuses on six priority areas of action, with the third pillar involving “support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence” In recognition of the importance of safe and respectful spaces for 2SLGBTQI+ people. WAGE wants to address violence against 2SLGBTQI+ people while also making sure it is moving forward in the right way.

Closing the gap between Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ people and their non-Indigenous counterparts includes taking down systems that were put in place to create and sustain these gaps. The IWC has made great progress in the last year towards transformative change, including establishing a leadership structure and work plan. There is interest in moving away from colonial approaches and ensuring that the IWC continues to listen to and be guided by your voices and those of Knowledge Keepers and Elders.



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT



A Sustainable, Affordable, and Culturally Appropriate Housing Model

Between the fall of 2022 and the spring of 2023, the Social Development team developed a preliminary housing model/design that acknowledges the distinct experiences of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people in urban, rural, northern, and remote areas. Several research and design activities informed the preliminary design: a literature review and cross-jurisdictional scan seeking similar housing models; a national online survey to engage 100 Indigenous WG2STGD+ people and inform the design; and a contracted architect who designed the preliminary building model.

Findings by Distinction

NWAC values a distinctions-based approach. This means that the needs of every Indigenous person and group—First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people, by geographic region across Canada—differ, and must be considered when developing policy or programming.

First Nations: Although many First Nations respondents expressed a desire to return to their home reserve or community, housing shortages and/or high housing costs keep them in urban areas. The affordability issue and additional respondent feedback are outlined in the final report. The most frequent comment was on the lack of multigenerational living spaces and large enough communal spaces (both indoor and outdoor) to accommodate gatherings. Whether in a single dwelling or apartment/condominium building, there is a need for sufficient space to





house immediate and extended family members. As well, many First Nations identified the need for a designated room for crafts (e.g., drum making, ribbon skirt making), harvesting medicine, and storage, one that is ventilated for smudging. Designated cultural spaces allow residents to connect and come together, regain and strengthen Indigenous ways of knowing, and pass cultural practices along to future generations.

Métis: Métis respondents identified common accessibility features in the home, and mentioned needs related to lawn and outdoor maintenance. As well, there were common design elements such as the use of round spaces (windows, living room, and kitchen seating areas) to foster gathering and community. Most respondents desired an abundance of Indigenous art and carved doorways, cabinets, and features. Remote locations, especially those with heavy snowfalls, require generators, deep freezers, pantries with non-perishable foods, and alternative sources of heat. Moreover, it was common in traditional housing to include an underground pantry for a large stock of traditional or harvested food items.

Inuit: Most Inuit respondents identified a desire for larger spaces, specifically backyards and garden spaces, to accommodate immediate and extended family members. As well, there was a desire to be close to nature, rivers, and parks. Specific to the North, the high cost of materials, shipping, and a limited construction season make it difficult to build new homes and maintain current homes. Thus, many people live

in housing that needs repair. As one respondent identified, regular home inspections can be “dangerous” because many of the houses would not meet housing standards, and tenants run the risk of being evicted in very cold climates (which could be less safe than living in a substandard house).

Two-Spirit, Transgender, Gender-Diverse, and LGBTQ People: Safety and security were major concerns for respondents who identify as Two-Spirit, transgender, gender-diverse and/or part of the LGBTQ+ community. Co-ed spaces, including emergency shelters and transitional housing, were perceived as unsafe for Indigenous WGT2GD+ and LGBTQ+ people, especially those escaping violence and single parents. Suggestions included gated building complexes, cameras near doorways, doorbell buzzers, well-lit areas around doorways and parking lots, and women-only shelters and support services, which are inclusive of transgender people (and provide a safe space for hormone treatments). In addition to physical safety, Indigenous 2STGD+ and LGBTQ+ people face intersectional discrimination, homophobia, or transphobia when accessing housing services, which suggests a need for culturally appropriate, Indigenous 2STGD+-led housing solutions, as well as cross-cultural and gender/sexuality awareness training for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff.

Geographic Regions: There were limited distinctions between geographic regions, as respondents had similar experiences, concerns, and suggestions across Canada. However, there are tangible





design considerations in regions with high rainfall, snowfall, permafrost, and areas prone to tornados, wildfires, and/or drought. As well, culturally appropriate Indigenous interior design and décor will differ across Indigenous groups and regions.

Preliminary Housing Model

The preliminary design process involved examining and considering outputs from the literature review, cross-jurisdictional scan, and a national online survey. Given affordability considerations, the architect was approached about creating a housing model with an interior space of 750 square feet. Within those constraints, the initial housing model aimed to cater to the specific needs of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people and consists of a single-storey structure with two bedrooms and one bathroom.

The design incorporates sustainability/eco-friendly features such as solar panels, rain collectors, and an attached greenhouse. Affordability features include the size, intent to exceed insulation requirements, electric heat and a wood stove, and use of adequate ventilation to reduce heating and cooling costs, while maintaining air quality and moisture control. The construction comprises two-thirds that would be prefab and a central area and greenhouse that would be built on-site, the latter from a kit. Furthermore, accessibility features such

as a ramp to the main entrance, wide doorways, and grab bars in the bathroom are also included. Additional accessibility features are expected to be added when interior design is done in stage 2.

The design also features culturally appropriate elements such as windows on all sides, skylights for natural light, storage closets and attached external storage, a central gathering area, an open concept kitchen and public zone, a main-floor laundry and pantry off the kitchen, a free-standing round wood stove with a dining table around it, an L-shaped couch in the living room, a courtyard/crafts area, and an attached greenhouse.

Overall, the proposed preliminary housing model is a promising approach that addresses the unique needs and preferences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit WG2STGD+ people while promoting sustainability, affordability, accessibility, and cultural appropriateness. See the report and design: **Development of a Sustainable Affordable and Culturally Appropriate Housing Model**.

In July, NWAC was negotiating agreement wording with CMHC for stage 2, where the design would be developed further. It would also involve feasibility studies and items such as obtaining letters of support, obtaining permits, and detailed costing. Stage 3 involves funding to build the unit(s).





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